

Sports Week

Former Lake-Lehman standout has posted an impressive 16-4 record Dragon breathing fire at Penn

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

Matt Dragon entered the University of Pennsylvania with high expectations — on and off the wrestling mat.

He's off to a great start.

The former Lake-Lehman standout has posted a 16-4 record during his freshman season as a member of the nationally-ranked Quakers. Dragon is also an outstanding student who is maintaining a 3.0 grade-point average while studying in the prestigious Wharton School of Business.

"I'm very grateful that I've been given the opportunity to go to this school," said the son of Matthew and Deborah Dragon of Harveys Lake. "I'm trying to make the most of it. Everything — wrestling, life at school, academics — is as good as I hoped it would be. And a lot better."

Dragon cruised through his senior year at Lake-Lehman, winning a state championship and setting the District 2 record with 166 career wins. He's adjusted well to the physical demands of being a Division I wrestler and he's on the verge of being nationally-ranked in the 149-pound weight division.

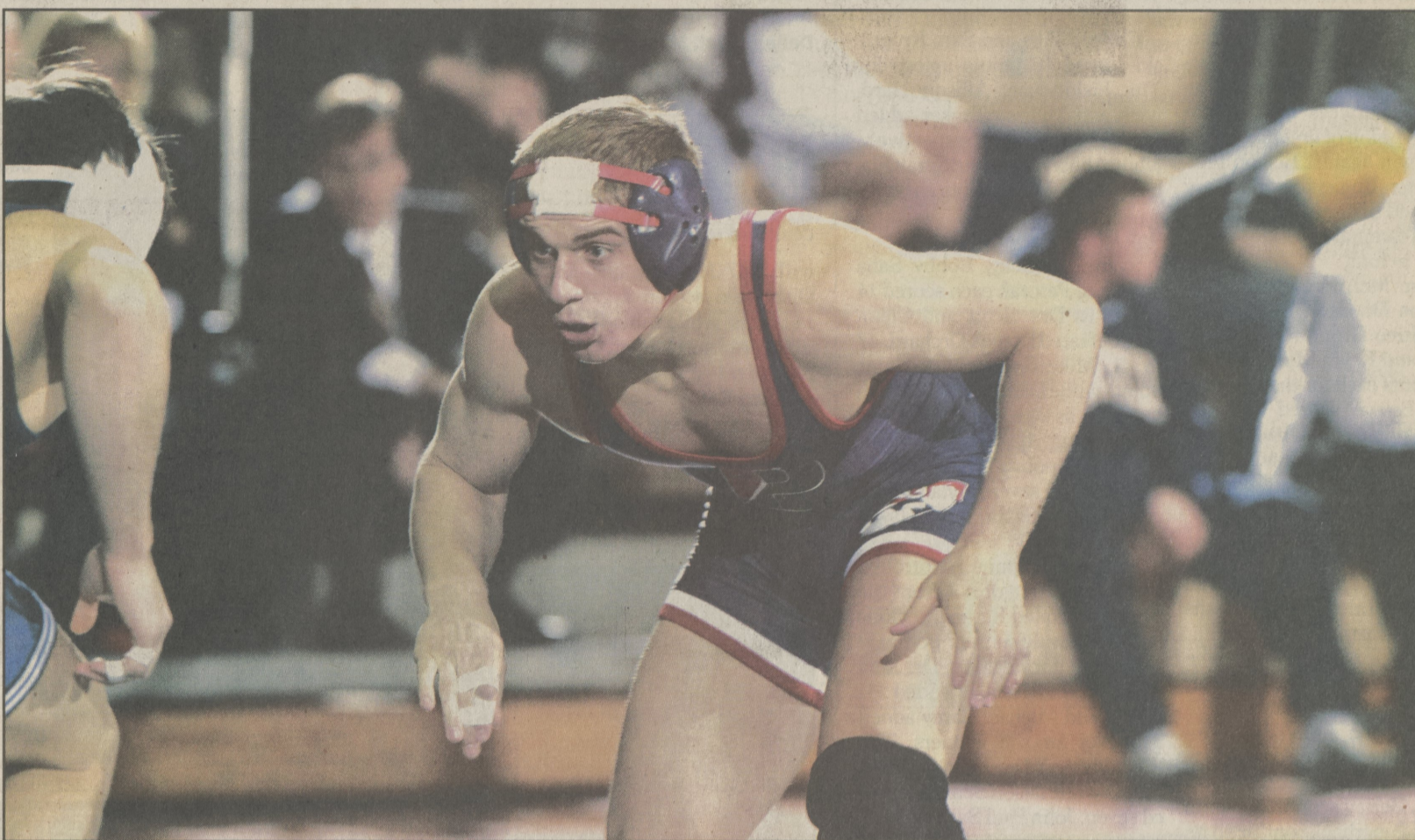
"It's the same style of wrestling as high school, only much more physical," he said. "And in college, you have to be ready to wrestle in every match. You're going against guys who were state champions in high school. You have to get tough or you're not going to survive."

Dragon credits much of his early collegiate success to first-year head coach Zeke Jones. The former member of the United States Wrestling Team coaching staff took over the Quaker program after being the assistant head coach at West Virginia for the past seven seasons.

"He's unique," said Dragon, referring to Jones, an Olympic silver medalist who also coached the United States freestyle team at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. "He's quiet at times but he'll yell, especially when he knows when you're not giving it all. If he sees you're putting in time and working hard, he's very supportive. He's competed at highest level and he's been successful. He knows what it takes to succeed. You listen to someone like that."

One of the things Jones has been stressing to Dragon is to keep up his intensity during his matches.

"You're always attacking. You're always on the go," he said. "You can be tired or hurt, but you can't look or act tired or hurt. You have to be your emotions. And if you see your opponent showing that he's tired, you go



Former Lake-Lehman wrestling standout Matt Dragon is off to an excellent start at the University of Pennsylvania.

PENN ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS



Lake-Lehman graduate Matt Dragon competes for the University of Pennsylvania during a recent meet against Penn State at The Palestra in Philadelphia. The former high school state champion is enjoying success on — and off — the mat during his freshman year at Penn.

ing in the prestigious Virginia Duals, the largest college and high school tournament in the world. Penn enters the event ranked 25th in the nation in the USA Today/NWCA/InterMat Division I Coaches Poll. With a couple of wins in the tournament, Dragon could find himself ranked among the elite wrestlers in his weight class.

And if he can earn a top-four finish at the upcoming EIWA championships, Dragon can earn a berth in the NCAA Division I championships.

"Right now, I'm just taking every match one at a time," he said. "When I wrestle a ranked opponent — well, actually any opponent, but especially a ranked one — I want to prove myself. I'm trying to get better and hopefully peak when the EIWA tournament is here."

"I want to win EIWAs and make it to nationals. That's my goal. Nationals would be a great learning experience. I want to do my best and maybe finish in top eight."

That would be a fitting end to what has been a remarkable freshman year.

"Everything I wished for coming in has fit like a puzzle. I'm on a very good team with a very good coach and going to a school with a great academic program. Things are great. I'm very fortunate."

after him." There certainly has been some adjusting for Dragon. The 18-year-old recorded a perfect 45-0 record last year and suffered only 11 losses during his four year high school career.

Not everyone is going to be Cael Sanderson and go undefeated for four years," said Dragon, referring to the former Iowa State star who didn't lose a match in college. "You're never pleased when you lose, but you

have to understand that you're in a big pond with big fish. You have to keep grinding through the tough times. Everyone loses in college."

This weekend Dragon and his Quaker teammates will be compet-

FRESHMAN BASKETBALL

Lake-Lehman, Dallas cruise to wins in junior high girls basketball

The two local freshman teams are near the top of the WVC standings

The Dallas and Lake-Lehman freshman girls basketball teams each posted a win in the Wyoming Valley Conference on Wednesday afternoon to remain near the top of the conference standings.

COMING UP NEXT

Lake-Lehman hosts Nanticoke Area and Dallas hosts Hanover Area at 4:15 p.m. Monday, Jan. 16.

At Lake-Lehman, Gaby Olshemski scored 11 points as the Black Knights posted a 38-30 win against Meyers.

At Dallas, the Mountaineers cruised to a win against Wyoming Area. A final score was not available.

The two Back Mountain teams squared off earlier this week, with Lake-Lehman coming away



Carly Menzel (14) of Dallas attempts to wrestle the ball away from a Wyoming Area player.

FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK



Gaby Olshemski (42) was the leading scorer for Lake-Lehman in a win against Meyers.